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C O N F I D E N T I A L DOHA 000152

SIPDIS

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PTER](#) [XF](#) [QA](#)

SUBJECT: QATARI VIEWS ON ELECTION OF HAMAS IN PALESTINIAN
AUTHORITY

Classified By: Ambassador Chase Untermeyer for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

[11](#). (C) Summary. The Qatari foreign minister said that Palestinian election results should be respected, as they came about by democratic means. Other Qataris and non-Qatari resident Arabs are cautiously optimistic that the Hamas victory will change the terrorist organization and will benefit the peace process in the long run. End Summary.

[12](#). (U) First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Hamad bin Jassim Al Thani said January 29 that Hamas came to power through the ballot box and that the West wants matters to be handled in this manner. He said all should accept the results and not be concerned about Hamas's assumption of power. He also said that Hamas of today is different than Hamas of the resistance period because it now has responsibility for the Palestinian administration and has inherited the peace process portfolio.

[13](#). (C) Views held by Qataris and other Arabs resident in Doha were elaborated on by a former Qatari minister of justice with good access to the Amir. He said that the Palestinians felt that they had made many concessions to the Israelis in the past several years and got nothing in return. The Israelis in fact continued military interventions and killings, rejected the Road Map, and withdrew from Gaza without PA cooperation, our contact said. Palestinian negotiators were not being taken seriously and the people felt "depressed." Thus the vote for Hamas was a vote to end futile compromises.

[14](#). (C) Our contact said that being in power is harder than being in opposition. Hamas, he said, should be given a chance and "should not be hindered" in governing. The view that Hamas came to power by legitimate means and that should be respected is widely held, he said.

[15](#). (C) Another embassy contact who follows regional issues said that he believed the situation will require Hamas to change and that the result will benefit the peace process.

COMMENT

[16](#). (C) Qataris and other local Arabs are not anxious over the election of Hamas because of the lack of achievement previously by Fatah leaders, but neither are they jubilant. Support for Hamas appears to be indirect as a "protest" alternative. Qatari and other Arab views are not widely different although it is likely that there is concern among senior Qatari leaders about the influence of Islamic parties in the region.

UNTERMEYER